

Francis Preston Blair to Andrew Jackson, June 18, 1840, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

class=MsoNormal>FRANCIS P. BLAIR TO JACKSON.

Washington, June [17], 1840.

My Dear General, Your kind letter of the last of May, would have been immediately answered but I hoped that the delay of a week or so would bring matters to a focus in congress and enable me to give you a good idea of what were to be the results of the Session. Alas! the speech-making mania runs so high that we have not yet had a vote to test the party strength on one essential of the Independent Treasury Bill. I believe, however, that there will not be any split in our party on the details, much less on the Specie clause as heretofore—and we should certainly pass it by an overwhelming vote, if it were possible to bring the House to the question. My opinion is that the Federalists have settled upon a plan of defeating the measure never heretofore attempted in this or any other Govt. Their leaders were over-heard telling their rank and file, that they must stave off the question by setting out in committee of the whole and not permitting it to come in to the House at all. And if they should be defeated in the project by the endurance of our side, they are to put in practice the plan repeatedly adopted to break up the committee during the night sessions—that of going out of the Hall. Unfortunately for us many on our side go home or are out of the way so that we never can have 122 present on any question. This number 0089 65 is necessary to a quorum and the want of this independently of the opposition, puts the Administration completely in dependance. I really apprehend that the Bill may be lost by a secession of the Federal party. Some of our friends have already gone home, some purpose to pair off, some are always sick, and so far with a decided majority, it has continually happened, that we have never mustered a quorum on

Library of Congress

our part, although we have beaten the opposition recently in every party struggle. I will come out and warn the country against these designs of the Federalists, which in effect, amount to revolution. I will summon in the absentees by articles in the Globe and trust that we may be able to muster a quorum without the opposition. If we cannot rely upon it, the Bill cannot be passed. The restless Leaders of Federalism fancy that a defeat of the administration upon its great measure, no matter how accomplished, will redound to its injury by disgracing it.

Genl. Harrison, who has been at hide and go-seek with the public is at last, I think, about to be thoroughly unmasked and caught and brought before the nation in a most disgraceful attitude. He wrote a letter to Evans of Maine, (who has gone all lengths in congress with Slade for the abolitionists) 1 in which he denounces as a vile slander the suggestion that he was ever in favor of Slavery—tells him that he joined an abolition Society at the age of 18 and has ever since been engaged in the prosecution of its principles and so inclined to do still by all means in his power. He adds that he emancipated a large inheritance of slaves and bought others to set free. (This by the way is a gross falsehood, for a life written by himself states that when his father died, he did not leave him more than enough to finish his education). His letter to Evans was in last Feby. It has been handed about among the abolitionists in congress and they have written to confidential friends to use it with the abolition conventions to prevent their organizing against him after his nomination. This was in Feby. last and he enjoined secrecy on the persons in regard to his letter. Now in June, he writes another to Mr. Lyon of Richmond, (which he directs not to be published) pretending that he could not believe he had ever said he had belonged to an abolition Society, doubts whether he ever used the words, (abolition) which he employed in 1822 to secure the votes of the abolitionists of Ohio, when a candidate for the Senate of the State and again in Feby. last to operate on the late Abolition conventions in his favor for the Presidency! Furney and others of congress who have seen that letter of Calhoun, of Mass., designed to effect the deliberations of the Springfield (Mass.) abolition convention have committed to memory this letter which the friends of Harrison refuse to

Library of Congress

give a copy of, for publication. Thus confronted with the letter to Lyon and the order of sleeping Committees that nothing was to be given “for the public eye” completely unveils the villainy by which Federalism hoped to succeed in the presidential campaign with its mock hero. You will have the whole story in the Globe in a few days.

1 George Evans of Maine, M. C. 1829–1841, senator 1841–1847; William Slade of Vermont, M. C. 1831–1843.

class=MsoNormal>0090 66

Mr. Kendall has mended mightily since he quit his office. His health will be restored, I think entirely. He will get at least 30,000 subscribers for the Extra Globe, and this will net him a clean profit of $12,000. The great enthusiasm with which the Democracy enter on this campaign, I think, renders victory for us, certain. But the opposition are using means which were never before used in this or any other country to the same extent. They make regular requisitions for money and from the enormous sums put at the disposal of the committee of Botts and co, there is no doubt but that it is furnished by the Banks. The Bank of the U. S. can furnish any amount of its suspended paper. If Harrison succeeds two millions spent to effect it would be a good investment; if he fails the whole top will fall on the people for the Bank will be utterly insolvent and will never pay a copper for its issues.

The President will remain in this neighborhood during the Summer, and will do his duty like a man, as vigorously and resolutely as you would have him. He will follow in your footsteps which never turned back from Federalism but always confronted and defeated it.

I trust the apprehension you express, that “you will soon be unable to write to me” will not be realized. It is a cherished hope that you will honor me with your correspondence at occasional intervals as long as you live, which I hope will be many years. But I would not tax your strength for long letters, though such are always the most gratifying. When to write a long letter would cost you pain, a single line saying how you are would not only be a kindness to me, but to the whole circle in which I move. My wife sends her love to you

Library of Congress

with mine and with as devout a heart as ever. Present us affectionately to Mrs. Jackson and the little ones and Andrew. As our matters approach a crisis you shall hear from me whenever I get a glimpse of things that do not appear in the papers.

Very kind regards to Major Donelson and believe me ever